



# COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKERS

## A COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKER (CHW)

A community health worker is a frontline public health worker who is a trusted member of and/or has an unusually close understanding of the community served. This trusting relationship enables the worker to serve as a liaison/link/intermediary between health/social services and the community to facilitate access to services and improve the quality and cultural competence of service delivery.<sup>3</sup>

CHWs are an effective way to become a Virtual PCMH and extend healthcare services to medically-underserved areas. As a member of the PCMH team, CHWs will serve as the bridge between individuals in the community and the health and social services in the community.

The Idaho Healthcare Coalition (IHC) is overseeing the expansion of Idaho CHWs who can serve rural communities as part of the Virtual PCMH.

Idaho will adopt and adapt the Massachusetts CHW training curriculum.

Training will be delivered through both live-online training and online course electives.

The Institute of Medicine's 2003 and 2010 Reports noted the positive impact of CHWs and recommended that CHWs can be used as essential members of a healthcare team.

CHWs have been found to:

- Improve access to primary care services
- Improve utilization of services
- Improve quality of care
- Reduce cost of care
- Improve the rate of health insurance coverage
- Significantly contribute to an increase in health promotion and disease prevention
- Help reduce health disparities by providing and arranging for cultural competent services<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> American Public Health Association definition of CHWs.

<sup>4</sup> "The Patient-Centered Medical Home's Impact on Cost and Quality: Annual Review of Evidence 2013 - 2014." Patient-centered Primary Care Collaborative, Milbank Memorial Fund. January 2015

## Background and Support for the Virtual PCMH Model

Idaho received federal State Innovation Model (SIM) grant funding to support and test the impact of transforming primary care services to a PCMH model.

The Idaho Healthcare Coalition, comprised of healthcare providers, payers, IDHW, Public Health Districts and other stakeholders, is overseeing the implementation of Idaho's healthcare transformation that is largely funded by the State's SIM grant.

The IHC has designated a significant portion of grant funds to establish Virtual PCMHs in rural communities.

Clinics participating in the Idaho's State Health Improvement Plan (SHIP) Model Test and working toward the PCMH model of care delivery are eligible to receive a \$2,500 Virtual PCMH incentive payment upon incorporating any of the three options identified as virtual modules: CHWs, CHEMS, and/or telehealth.

Support will also be provided to clinics interested in establishing a Virtual PCMH through trainings, peer mentoring programs, learning collaboratives, and other resources identified by the IHC.

# THE VIRTUAL PATIENT-CENTERED MEDICAL HOME (PCMH)

## A Model for Idaho's Rural and Underserved Communities

A Patient-Centered Medical Home (PCMH) is a partnership between the patient, primary care provider, and a team of healthcare professionals to provide coordinated services that focus on the patient's total health needs.

Virtual PCMHs are an important part of the Idaho's goal to expand access to the PCMH team-based model through an innovative approach that maximizes and creates new community resources.

## What is a Virtual Patient-Centered Medical Home?

The Virtual PCMH model is Idaho's unique approach to establishing PCMHs in rural, medically under-served areas. Through the Virtual PCMH, the traditional PCMH healthcare team is expanded to include previously untapped existing local resources and remote resources technology.



Based on community needs and resources, any or all of the three options may be used to establish a Virtual PCMH.

- 1 Expand the PCMH team to include local Community Health Workers (CHWs).
- 2 Engage local Community Health Emergency Medical Services (CHEMS) personnel to participate in the PCMH team.
- 3 Utilize telehealth technology to access and coordinate with healthcare specialists not available in the community.

## Benefits of a Virtual PCMH

A Virtual PCMH will realize the same benefits as a traditional PCMH by extending the PCMH team-based care model that improves quality and coordination of services.

A recent report<sup>1</sup> looked at 28 studies on the impact of the PCMH model and found:

- 17 demonstrated improvements in the cost of care
- 24 found utilization of services improved
- 11 showed improvements in quality
- 10 demonstrated improvements in access
- 8 found improvements in patient satisfaction

The Virtual PCMH model will introduce new resources into rural, medically under-served communities that will help fill the gaps in Idaho's healthcare professional workforce shortage areas.

<sup>1</sup> The Patient-Centered Medical Home's Impact on Cost and Quality: Annual Review of Evidence 2013 - 2014." Patient-centered Primary Care Collaborative, Milbank Memorial Fund. January 2015





## TELEHEALTH

**TELEHEALTH** is a mode of delivering healthcare services that uses information and communication technologies to enable the diagnosis, consultation, treatment, education, care management and self-management of patients at a distance from health providers.<sup>2</sup>

Many Idahoans have limited access to behavioral health and specialty services, particularly those living in one of the state's 35 rural or frontier counties.

Telehealth is an important tool for providing access to essential services that may not otherwise be available in medically-underserved communities.

The IHC is working with an Idaho Telehealth Council subcommittee and stakeholders from around the state to expand telehealth services. A SHIP telehealth plan is being developed to operationalize telehealth in rural PCMH clinics.

The SHIP Telehealth plan will include:

- Onsite and virtual training resources for PCMHs, CHEMS, and Public Health District SHIP staff
- Best practice resources for the delivery of telehealth services.
- A peer mentoring program for new users of Telehealth technology.

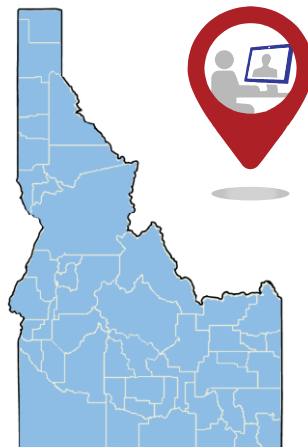
Clinics employing telehealth can be designated as a Virtual PCMH while offering their patients the benefits of telehealth technology, which may include:

- Earlier diagnosis and treatment
- Access to specialists for those with chronic or complex medical conditions
- Reductions in ER visits and hospital admissions
- Timely evaluation of behavioral health needs
- Transportation savings and missed work savings for patients
- Reducing or containing healthcare costs through better disease management, reduced patient complications, and fewer or shorter hospital stays

<sup>2</sup> Legislative Citation: <https://goo.gl/dZeVPB>

## Behavioral Health and Physical Health Integration

There is a severe shortage of behavioral health (BH) professionals across all of Idaho. Telehealth can help provide access to mental health and substance abuse services and help integrate BH services in the primary care setting.



The IHC is working with the Telehealth Council, providers, and other stakeholders to:

- Identify training, equipment, and other resources needed to increase access to BH services through telehealth.
- Establish telehealth capacity in at least 18 Virtual PCMHs in order to expand access to timely behavioral health services in rural underserved communities.

## COMMUNITY HEALTH EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES (CHEMS)



**COMMUNITY HEALTH EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES (CHEMS)** is an innovative model where emergency medical services (EMS) personnel are incorporated into the general healthcare delivery system to increase access to healthcare and extend the reach of primary care into a patient's environment.

The CHEMS model draws upon the extensive medical expertise of Idaho's emergency medical services (EMS) to expand access to primary care services for Idaho's rural and underserved residents.

Traditionally, EMS personnel deliver care in a non-clinical setting, function within interdisciplinary teams, and provide medical services during transport to emergency departments and hospitals. The CHEMS model expands the role of EMS personnel beyond emergency and crisis services to extending primary care services as part of the Virtual PCMH team-based care.

As part of the PCMH team, EMS personnel communicate with the primary care provider to ensure care coordination, appropriate care oversight, and implementation of a care plan. This occurs by leveraging and partnering with current resources and other healthcare providers.

Data will be collected on the CHEMS model to evaluate the impact on patient care and costs.

A Virtual PCMH using the CHEMS model can use EMS personnel in a number of different ways as a member of the PCMH team.

Potential role for CHEMS:

- In-home follow up after a hospital stay or discharge from an emergency department
- Administering vaccinations
- Hospice support
- Follow up and support for individuals with chronic conditions
- Health checks for frequent 911 callers
- Health care navigators
- Basic medical therapeutics
- Medication inventories
- Resource and care coordination

## LEARN MORE ABOUT IDAHO'S VIRTUAL PCMH

Contact your Public Health District SHIP Project Manager for more information about how to establish a Virtual PCMH.

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More information can also be found at: <http://ship.idaho.gov/>